United Nations E/2008/34 (Part I)/Add.1–E/ICEF/2008/7 (Part I)/Add.1

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
3 March 2008

Original: English

# Report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund on the work of its 2008 first regular session*

**(29 January-1 February 2008)***

**Addendum**

## Joint meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP

## A. Progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals

1. The President of the UNICEF Executive Board invited the Deputy Executive Director to introduce the background paper and discussion on behalf of UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA and WFP. The Deputy Executive Director highlighted the uneven picture of progress given by recent data and said that a collective sense of urgency was needed if the Millennium Development Goals were to be met.

2. The Coordinator of the Technical Department of the Poverty Reduction Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Economy, Industry and Trade of the Government of Mali and the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Malawi shared country perspectives on how progress could be further scaled up and accelerated under national leadership.

3. In the discussion that followed, several delegations noted progress made but expressed concern that several countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, were not on track.

4. Delegations made the following recommendations to accelerate progress: emphasize Government leadership and national ownership as well as increased support from multilateral

* The present report, submitted as an addendum to the report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on its first regular session (29 January-1 February 2008), is a summary of the discussions that took place during the joint meeting of the Executive Boards of UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund and the World Food Programme, held on 25 and 28 January 2008; it was prepared jointly by the secretariats of the funds and programmes.

08-25801 (E) 250308

organizations in scaling up efforts; take more 'bottom-up' approaches so that marginalized groups benefit from scaling-up; ensure the availability of United Nations staff to support country efforts; reach out to the private sector and non-governmental organizations; and encourage South-South cooperation in the sharing and implementation of good practices. More attention should be given to addressing debt relief for poor countries, the fulfilment of aid promises by donor countries, unequal trade relations, gender inequality and the degradation of the environment.

5. A number of delegations recommended a greater focus on least developed countries, especially as demographic changes, economic growth, job creation, security, and a strong international response to conflicts and climate change can impact progress. More than just income factors should be used to classify countries so that efforts can focus on disparity-reduction, especially in middle-income countries. Also recommended was a more comprehensive assessment of progress towards Goal 8, including private funds and new donors.

6. In response, the panellists described country-level efforts to overcome challenges in achieving the Goals, including more comprehensive poverty-reduction programmes, anti- corruption efforts and capacity development. It was suggested that greater attention be paid to the migration of skilled personnel from low-income to industrialized countries; to sustaining gains in food production; and to ensuring quality education. International support needed to be more predictable so that recipient countries could improve their planning. The United Nations should place the Millennium Development Goals at the centre of its work in a coherent way, ensure quality support to countries and advocate for more resources to be given to Governments that demonstrate commitment to the Goals.

7. The Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF recommended a focus on policy change; on data collection, analysis and dissemination, particularly concerning disparities; and on population groups that are excluded and affected by conflict. Acceleration efforts should focus, even beyond 2015, on challenges associated with sanitation, quality education, and birth registration, among others.

## B. Feedback from the 'delivering as one' pilots

### Part one

8. The President of the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board invited the UNFPA Executive Director to introduce the item on Feedback from the 'delivering as one' pilots on behalf of the four agencies. The Executive Director underscored that the session was focused on hearing from the Member States, including those participating in the pilots. Highlighting key points from the stocktaking exercise, she noted that the feedback from the pilots showed that the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) formed the foundation of the one United Nations programme and derived from national development priorities. Joint programming and programmes had received positive reviews. Also, the strategic alignment of United Nations support to national development would reduce duplication and transaction costs, and the initiative's overall direction was positive.

9. The Minister of Integration of Albania noted that the ability to align the work of the United Nations family in Albania to the unique national priority of accession to the European Union had been

one of the key achievements to date. She emphasized the importance of government leadership in selecting which agencies, given their comparative advantages, had a key role to play in supporting national goals. She underscored that the overall impression of her Government was very positive concerning 'delivering as one'.

10. The Secretary-General, Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning of Rwanda, highlighted his Government's positive experience with the pilot. He stressed the importance of close linkage between national planning instruments and the UNDAF to ensure a strong United Nations programme in the country and noted that the pilot initiative was directly related to the commitments in the Paris Declaration.

11. Delegations from the United Republic of Tanzania, Mozambique, Uruguay, and Viet Nam (countries participating in the pilots) underscored that national ownership and leadership were essential for the initiative to work. They emphasized that each country was unique and there was no "one size fits all" approach. They expressed cautious optimism about improved United Nations coherence and increased linkages between national priorities and United Nations programmes. They noted that the 'delivering as one' process was labour-intensive and that it was too early to assess development impact.

12. Key issues raised during the subsequent discussion included the need for: patience, as it was too early for an impact evaluation; donors to provide predictable aid; capacity-building of partners to remain a key focus area for the United Nations; and an increased leadership role of the Resident Coordinators while maintaining neutrality and an inclusive system-wide focus.

13. Some delegations inquired about the "one fund" and expressed concern that core funds might be co-mingled. Panellists clarified that the "coherence funds" in the pilots did not contain core funds, only co-financing resources. It was noted that Governments retained the ability to fund agency-specific activities. Nevertheless, such activities should fall under the joint planning of the full United Nations Country Team. The importance of focusing on substance and results, and not just process, was emphasized.

**Part two**

14. The President of the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board invited the Administrator, UNDP, to open part two of the discussion on the 'delivering as one' pilots on behalf of the four organizations. The Administrator spoke of the overarching parameters of flexibility and national ownership, noting that each pilot was tailored to the specific country context following the guidance of the triennial comprehensive policy review. The Administrator highlighted that the pilots were demonstrating how the United Nations system as a whole can be more effectively aligned with national priorities, and that joint programming is an essential component, centered on the UNDAF.

15. The following persons then offered their experience with the pilots: the Resident Coordinator in Albania; the UNICEF Representative in Rwanda; the Deputy Executive Director of the World Food

Programme; and the Assistant Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

16. Representatives of the World Health Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme recognized the pilots as an important platform for improving coherence and effectiveness, and the nationally owned, demand-driven nature of the pilots. They noted that the new UNDAF guidelines are more inclusive and responsive to 'delivering as one', while urging care in combining the meticulously constructed existing agreements into a single plan. They underscored the value of partnerships within the United Nations system, recognizing a need to strengthen the resident coordinator system with the highest quality of leadership and managerial talent and with clearer lines of accountability.

17. Delegations acknowledged the positive experiences of the pilots in creating greater alignment with national priorities and greater coherence within the United Nations system, noting that all United Nations country team members have a part to play in optimizing the resident coordinator system. They emphasized the importance of a flexible, national and context-specific approach in scaling up efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals. Delegations also expressed the need to reinvest savings into programmes and to reduce reporting and administrative burdens. Many recognized the stocktaking process as a precursor to a formal evaluation process, while some requested that this be based on criteria established together by all Member States and include issues such as the costs involved in coherence.

18. Many delegations cautioned against too rapid an adoption of any particular model for 'delivering as one', reiterating that coherence was a means to effectiveness rather than an end in itself, and that alternatives were still being assessed in other international forums. They stressed that coherence must be nationally led, and asserted that resources should not be reallocated based on the early experiences of the pilots, but should continue to be distributed based on multilaterally agreed formulas and principles. Some pointed out security and logistical considerations inherent in the 'one office' model. Many called on senior management at headquarters to support the pilots with clear communication; to harmonize business practices; and to facilitate and accelerate decision-making at country level. Several called on donors to provide adequate, predictable and timely funding.

## C. Disaster risk reduction strategies

19. The President of the Executive Board of the WFP introduced the item, providing the audience with the main themes of the session. Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) was an ideal topic for the joint meeting of the Executive Boards because it extended across development and emergencies. The joint meeting provided an opportunity to become familiarized with the concept and vocabulary of DRR and why it should be integrated into the policies and programmes of the United Nations funds and programmes.

20. The Deputy Executive Director of WFP spoke on the topic on behalf of the four organizations. In her remarks, she emphasized adaptation and the need to mitigate the risks of natural disasters and build resilience among those most likely to be hardest hit. Thus, there was an urgent need to engage

fully in DRR. United Nations organizations could do more to mitigate risks and build resilience by working together under the Hyogo Framework for Action. A stronger link between humanitarian and development efforts was needed to reduce the impact of disasters on vulnerable communities.

21. The Director of Civil Protection of the Government of Haiti presented a country-level perspective on DRR strategies. She described Haiti's vulnerability to natural hazards and the social and economic situation of the country; she then presented the national DRR strategy and the framework of collaboration with donors and the United Nations system for implementing the strategy.

22. The Deputy Director of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) described the ISDR coordination mechanism to support the Hyogo Framework for Action. She recommended building on existing structures such as the Hyogo Framework and ISDR to address DRR and making links with development and climate change. She also presented the Joint Work Programme with United Nations organizations and the existing funding mechanisms.

23. The delegations expressed their appreciation of the background paper and renewed their support to the four organizations for mainstreaming DRR into their policies and programmes. The delegations insisted on the need to link DRR with adaptation to climate change; some emphasized that DRR could reduce the cost of recovery efforts.

24. The delegations commended the four organizations for their important contributions to a more coherent United Nations at country level, noting that development and emergency response could not be seen as separate issues and stressing that ISDR was the main mechanism for implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action. They also mentioned the need for the United Nations Development Group to systematically increase its support to Member States for DRR.

25. The delegations urged the four organizations to focus on their mandates and work together with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and ISDR to determine individual roles. Coherent, linked action was needed, in accordance with individual institutional mandates. The question was raised of how to better link emergency and development activities, given the leading role of UNDP on early recovery. The importance of sharing information was also stressed. A delegation asked about funding mechanisms for adaptation to climate change.

26. In its response to questions and comments, the panel noted that the background paper was a general document intended to help the four organizations commence joint work on DRR and was not meant to imply that any of them should go beyond their individual mandates. The panel members acknowledged the threefold challenge of making a connection between relief and development, working in partnership and being guided by country strategies that prioritized DRR.